

THE CARE OF CHILDREN UNDER THE POOR LAW.

ONE of the wisest actions of Guardians within recent years has been the abolition, in some instances, of pauper schools, the children under their care being sent to the National or Board Schools in the District. The West Ham Guardians have lately decided to send their children to the Leyton Board Schools, and last week two of the lady Guardians marched forty of the workhouse children down to the newly opened Board School. The children were, however, firmly but courteously, refused admission. The Guardians propose to appeal to the Education Department, and, in the event of an unfavourable reply, they contemplate refusing to pay the School Board rate. The complete isolation of pauper children by bringing them up and educating them within the workhouse is most undesirable, and, indeed, unkind, if it can in any way be avoided. The children inevitably suffer for the sins of their forefathers, and, with the pauper taint in their blood, they go out into the world with the pauper brand upon them, and it is not surprising if they become in their turn, as adults, chargeable to the rates. They go out into the world at an early age, with no knowledge of the commonest domestic duties, frequently, in the case of the girls, as general servants, and are regarded as hopelessly stupid and incompetent, whereas in their institutional life they have never had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the most ordinary details of a small household. They return to the workhouse as unsuitable, and drift from bad to worse. The drawbacks of life in a large institution for young children are to some extent modified by their attendance at the public schools of the district, where they come into contact with other children, and the adoption of this plan has been in many instances followed by admirable results. We hope, therefore, that the Education Department will uphold the West Ham Guardians.

It is interesting to notice the provision made in Berlin for destitute children. There is a very complete organization, not only for the care of waifs and strays, but also for the children of parents who are too ill, or too poor, to care for them. The administration is centred in an enormous depôt, the Director of the depôt being responsible for the welfare of the children. He decides what is to be done with each, makes the necessary arrangements, finds a

home for it, and watches that its appointed guardians do their duty by it, rights any wrong done to the child, and, if a child goes astray, tries to make it once more a useful member of Society.

A noticeable feature of the Poor Law Administration of Berlin is that there are two sections, one dealing with the relief of adults, the other with that of children. Guardians are elected for each section, which works independently of the other. Further, the services of ladies are employed to assist the Guardians in matters relating to girls and young children, and every fatherless child supported by the city, excepting those in institutions, is provided with a personal guardian, who acts as its legal representative, and looks after its interests. It seems, therefore, that there are points in the administration of the German Poor Law which might with advantage be adopted in this country.

MONEY WELL SPENT.

SIR WALTER FOSTER, M.D., M.P., recently opened a new hospital for infectious diseases, erected at Enfield by the Urban District Council. In declaring the building open, Sir Walter Foster said that the local debt of this country totals 252 millions sterling. Of this, one and a-half millions have been expended in providing hospital accommodation. He wished the rest had been equally well spent. There were, in the metropolitan area, in 1898, 31,829 cases of infectious disease, which were eligible for hospitals. Imagine each one of those cases spread over that area, each becoming a centre of infection in its own locality. With isolation accommodation, again, the mortality from scarlet fever and diphtheria was greatly diminished. During the last twelve years the mortality from scarlet fever had been reduced by one-half, and an even greater diminution had been effected in the mortality from diphtheria. Public money was never more advantageously spent than in promoting and preserving the public health—an inestimable asset of the commonwealth. Certainly we may hope that, with adequate isolation accommodation, infectious diseases will become increasingly rare. It is also of the greatest benefit to patients suffering from these diseases to be cared for in hospitals where they are made a special study, as in such institutions, the treatment becomes, from much experience, as nearly perfect as possible.

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